JUSTICE LEAGUE
TASK FORCE
4
SEP 93

MICHELINIE, VELLUTO & ALBRECHT

JUSTICE LEAGUE TASK FORCE™

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

GYPSY™ ON THE CASE UNTIL LADY SHIVA™ CRASHES THE PARTY!!

Velluto
Albrecht

THEY SAY THAT HELL HATH NO FURY...

BUT SHE'S NOT FURIOUS.

SHE HASN'T BEEN SCORNED.

SHE HASN'T EVEN BROKEN A SWEAT.

THE ARSENAL OF SOULS

SIX AGAINST ONE.

SHOULD BE CAKE FOR A HALF DOZEN TOUGH GUYS LIKE THIS.

BUT IT'S NOT A FIGHT FOR HER...

...IT'S STRICTLY MURDER.

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THE FIGHT IS ARTLESS; NO FINESSE. THESE THUGS AREN'T WORTH IT.

EACH BLOW IS A DEATH BLOW.

EACH BLOW SAVE ONE.

I AM LOOKING FOR SA'AR.

NEVER HEARD OF 'IM, LADY.

DO NOT LIE TO ME.

UNNH!

I... CAN'T... HELP YOU... LADY.

I COULD HELP YOU.

YOU WEAR HIS MARK.

I COULD MAKE THIS PAINLESS.

BUT I WON'T.

AND MY NAME IS NOT "LADY."

IT IS LADY SHIVA.

THE TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE

IT IS SA'AR. THE AGELESS ONE. THE DEATHLESS SAGE.

THE TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE

SHE MIGHT NEVER HAVE NOTICED HIS VISAGE AMONG THE CLUTTER OF POSTERS.

IN HIS OWN WAY THE THUG DOES AID HER SEARCH FOR SA'AR.

HE HIDES IN PLAIN SIGHT.

HE HIDES HERE IN THE VILLAGE.

THE TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE

THIRD DAY OF DOWNTIME. THIS LAG BETWEEN ASSIGNMENTS IS STARTING TO GET OLD.

THE ONLY ACTION I'M GOING TO SEE TODAY IS A JOG DOWN TO THE DELI...

...FOR BAGELS AND FRUITCUP. MAYBE SOME TOFUTTI? MAYBE NOT.

BUT HE MIGHT HAVE COME IN HERE. WE USED TO COME IN TOGETHER.

LOT OF CUSTOMERS. HARD TO REMEMBER ALL.

JUST TAKE ANOTHER LOOK. PLEASE.

DANIELLE?

IT'S MINDY, RIGHT?

CINDY, ACTUALLY. ONE FLIGHT UP AT THE END OF THE HALL.

YOU SOUND LIKE YOU'RE IN TROUBLE.

MY BOYFRIEND...

IT'S BEEN A WEEK. HE'D NEVER STAY AWAY LIKE THIS WITHOUT CALLING.

DID YOU GUYS HAVE A FIGHT?

WELL...

MAYBE HE WENT HOME TO HIS FOLKS.

I CALLED THEM. THEY HAVEN'T SEEN CAL. I'M SO WORRIED. THERE'S BEEN SO MANY PEOPLE DISAPPEARING LATELY.

HM.

I CAN HELP, DANIELLE. I KNOW SOME PEOPLE I CAN TALK TO.

TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE

THANKS, MINDY.

CINDY.

SO I THINK THIS IS SOMETHING WE SHOULD LOOK INTO, HANNIBAL. I ASKED AROUND CASUALLY AND EVERYONE I TALKED TO KNOWS SOMEONE WHO'S VANISHED.

I SPECIFICALLY ASKED FOR SWISS ON THIS OMELET. CHEDDAR IS SO DAMN *RUNNY*.

YOU HAVEN'T HEARD A WORD I'VE SAID.

YES I HAVE, GYPSY. SOME KIDS ARE MISSING IN THE VILLAGE. YOUR FRIEND'S *BOY*FRIEND RAN OFF. MAYBE WE SHOULD CALL OUT THE *ENTIRE* JUSTICE LEAGUE FOR THIS ONE.

HANNIBAL MAY BE RIGHT, GYPSY. CAN'T THE POLICE HANDLE THIS?

IT'S NOT JUST A FEW PEOPLE MISSING. IT'S AN *EPIDEMIC*.

I SEE. NOW IT'S A *CRISIS*. MAYBE YOU COULD ORGANIZE A SUPPORT GROUP OR MAYBE GO ON DONAHUE.

WHY DO I BOTHER?

SLAM!

THINK SHE'LL GO THIS ONE ON HER OWN, J'ONZZ?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I THINK YOU'D BETTER PROVIDE HER A LITTLE DISCREET BACK-UP. OBSERVE HER. BUT DON'T STEP IN UNLESS YOU *HAVE* TO.

LET'S SEE WHAT GYPSY CAN DO ON HER OWN.

DAMN CHEDDAR.

HOURS OF BEATING THE PAVEMENT AND THERE'S NOTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY. SAME OLD. SAME OLD.

FOR THIS NEIGHBORHOOD, ANYWAY.

...YOU WOULD BE WELCOME IN THE TEMPLE.

I DON'T KNOW, MAN...

BUT WITH THE GUIDANCE OF THE AGELESS ONE YOU WOULD KNOW.

INNER PEACE. A SENSE OF WORTH. OF BELONGING.

WE SHARE A POWER THROUGH THE SAGE. THROUGH HIM WE ENTER A NEW WORLD.

THIS MIGHT BE WORTH A LISTEN.

SO WHAT'S THIS COST?

NOTHING. ONLY YOUR DEVOTION. ONLY OBEDIENCE TO THE TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE.

AM I JUST TIRED OR DOES THIS SOUND *CREEPIER* THAN THE USUAL SIDEWALK CULT PITCH?

THIS GUY'S VOICE IS LIKE A *DRILL* IN MY HEAD.

BRING US YOUR FAITH AND HE SHALL REWARD YOU WITH ETERNITY.

GOOD WORK, GYPSY. I SENSED SOMETHING STRANGE HERE AS WELL.

NO OBVIOUS DANGER THOUGH.

I'LL KEEP MY DISTANCE.

THE POSTERS LEAD HER TO A CRUMBLING TENEMENT IN THE EAST VILLAGE.

MORE THUGS.

THE AGELESS ONE IS NOT SO PARTICULAR.

HE SURROUNDS HIMSELF WITH GUTTER TRASH.

PERHAPS THE LEGENDS OF SA'AR ARE EXAGGERATED.

PERHAPS SHE HAS COME HALFWAY AROUND THE WORLD IN PURSUIT OF LIES.

TEMPLE OF AUGUST SILENCE, HUH? ROACH MOTEL'S MORE LIKE IT.

MAN, THE DRONER'S NOT LETTING UP ON THIS GUY.

FEEL IT? FEEL THE PEACE OF THIS PLACE? ALREADY YOUR TROUBLES ARE BEING LIFTED FROM YOU.

NOW TO MEET THE AGELESS ONE. THE DEATHLESS SAGE. THE KEEPER OF THE TEMPLE.

MASTER SA'AR, I BRING YOU ANOTHER LOST ONE. HE IS PREPARED TO JOIN THE FAMILY OF THE MIND.

IS THIS SO?

I GUESS.

YOU MUST BELIEVE... UTTERLY. YOU MUST CAST DOUBT FROM YOUR MIND... YOUR PERCEPTIONS OF LIFE WILL BE USELESS AFTER TONIGHT...

JUST ANOTHER EASTERN PHILOSOPHY CON. I WONDER WHEN HE'S GOING TO CALL THE GUY "GRASSHOPPER!"

LET'S SEE WHAT THE REST OF THIS DUMP LOOKS LIKE.

IT APPEARS THAT GYPSY'S HUNCH MAY PROVE FRUITFUL.

DEAD. BOTH OF THEM.

THIS IS SERIOUS. MAYBE TOO SERIOUS FOR GYPSY ALONE.

BUT SHE MAY FACE FAR WORSE IN THE TASK FORCE. SHE HAS TO PROVE HERSELF.

BUT THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH SCANNING THE BUILDING TO SEE WHAT SHE'S UP AGAINST.

CURIOUS.

SOME FORCE BLOCKS MY VISION. GYPSY'S TRIAL RUN IS OVER.

I'LL GIVE HER HIGH MARKS FOR DETECTIVE WORK BUT THIS MAY TAKE MORE THAN DEDUCTIVE REASONING. INTERVENTION IS CALLED FOR.

SA'AR HAS GROWN BRAZEN.

HIS SECURITY IS LAX. HIS GUARDS ARE A JOKE.

IF THERE WERE ANY WAY HE COULD HAVE KNOWN SHE WAS COMING SHE MIGHT SUSPECT A TRAP.

CANDLELIGHT AND INCENSE. AND WHAT'S THAT MOANING?

I'LL BET EVERY ONE OF THESE PEOPLE ARE AMONG THE VANISHED.

THEY ALL LOOK ZONED-OUT.

AND EMACIATED. GOD, SOME OF THEM LOOK LIKE THEY HAVEN'T EATEN IN WEEKS.

SA'AR.

I AM YOUR DESTROYER.

MANY HAVE CLAIMED TO BE THAT... MANY HAVE DIED...

HAIIIIIIIII!

URSO...

I AM ONLY HERE FOR THE AGELESS ONE. IF THE REST OF YOU WANT TO LIVE, YOU CAN LEAVE NOW.

PERHAPS YOU ARE MORE SKILLED THAN SA'AR'S OTHER CRETINS.

PERHAPS YOU ARE ONLY A COMMON BRAWLER.

SHE IS DISAPPOINTED.

TO COME ALL THIS WAY.

ONLY TO FIND SA'AR A HUSK OF A MAN.

JEEZE, IT'S...

CAL!

REMEMBER ME? I LIVE UPSTAIRS FROM YOU.

CAL, I'M GOING TO TAKE YOU HOME. MAYBE PICK UP A PIZZA ON THE WAY, ALL RIGHT?

WE'RE GOING BACK TO DANIELLE. SHE'S WORRIED SICK.

CAN'T YOU HEAR ME?

WHOA.

MMMMMMM

MMMMMM

THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.

IT ENDS NOW.

UNNH!

THE WHOLE AFFAIR HAS BEEN A WASTE OF TIME.

A SWEATY FIGHT WITH A SKILLED BUT UNREMARKABLE FIGHTER.

SHE THOUGHT THIS MIGHT BE A CHALLENGE.

INSTEAD IT'S ONLY SLAUGHTER.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

THIS IS UNEXPECTED.

YOU SAID YOU ARE MY DESTROYER.

IS YOUR NAME SHIVA?

LADY SHIVA.

ALL THAT I HEARD IS TRUE.

IF YOU HEARD THAT I AM CENTURIES OLD... IF YOU HEARD THAT I LEARNED EVERY MARTIAL ARTS FORM AT THE FEET OF THEIR CREATORS...

IF YOU HAVE HEARD THAT I HAVE SLAIN TEN THOUSAND MEN WITH THESE HANDS...

THEN YOU HAVE HEARD TRUE!

THE COPPERY TASTE OF BLOOD IN HER MOUTH. THE WHITE-HOT FLAME OF ADRENALIN IN HER VEINS.

IT'S DELICIOUS.

HE IS FAST. FAST BEYOND MEASURE.

THAT HUMMING... IT'S WORKING ON MY NERVES... HYPNOTIC...

MMMMMMMMMMMMMM

HAVE TO DO SOMETHING TO BREAK THEIR TRANCE. I'LL TRY A BIG-BUDGET ILLUSION.

FIRE AND BRIMSTONE USUALLY SHAKES 'EM UP.

MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM

NOBODY EVEN BLINKED.

THEY MIGHT AS WELL HAVE BEEN WATCHING A BOWLING TOURNAMENT. WHAT *ELSE* YOU GOT IN YOUR BAG OF TRICKS, GIRL?

SHE HAS TIME TO DO NOTHING EXCEPT DEFEND HERSELF.

HIS BLOWS RAIN DOWN ON HER WITHOUT RELIEF.

HE COUNTERS EACH MOVE.

HE SEEMS TO GROW STRONGER WITH EACH SECOND.

SHE CAME LOOKING FOR A CHALLENGE.

INSTEAD SHE HAS MET HER MATCH.

OR EVEN HER SUPERIOR.

YOU ARE WELL NAMED.

I HAVE FOUGHT MANY AND MANY HAVE EARNED MY RESPECT; THE GRAND MASTER OF THE KHWURSHAH, THE CLAN OF ITO, THE TIGERS OF WEI.

ALL FELL BEFORE ME. AS WILL YOU.

YOU.

YOU'RE THE SOURCE OF THE PSYCHIC ENERGY THAT BLOCKS MY VISION.

ANOTHER CHALLENGER. A SUPERHUMAN ONE. A NON-HUMAN, PERHAPS?

YOU ARE NOTHING AGAINST THE WEAPONS OF SA'AR!

UH!

MINE IS THE POWER OF A HUNDRED MINDS FOCUSED INTO ONE.

A HUNDRED SOULS FUEL ME.

CAN YOU STAND AGAINST THAT?

PSIONIC POWERS... TOO STRONG...

CAN'T... LET HIM... KILL HER...

YOU SEE? I COULD HAVE DESTROYED YOU WITH JUST A THOUGHT, LADY SHIVA.

BUT I WANTED TO KEEP OUR COMBAT ON A PHYSICAL PLANE.

OKAY... OKAY...

ONE MORE SHOT. THEY'RE IN THE HOLD OF EVIL. HELLFIRE ISN'T GOING TO CUT IT.

SOMETHING DIFFERENT... SOMETHING TO MELLOW THEM OUT... CHANGE THE MOOD...

I... I...

UH?

WHERE... WHERE IS THIS?

BROKE THE TRANCE. WHATEVER WAS HOLDING THEM HAS LOST ITS GRIP.

HIS SKILLS ARE SUDDENLY ERODING.

HE SEEMS SURPRISED AT THIS TURN.

NO...

NO... WHERE ARE MY THRALLS... WHAT HAS...

UHHHHHH...

HIS NAME?

SA'AR. THE AGELESS ONE.

I HEARD OF HIM LONG AGO. I THOUGHT IT WAS ONLY A STORY.

J'ONN, YOU FOLLOWED ME HERE? THIS WAS HANNIBAL'S IDEA, RIGHT?

IT WAS. WHAT MAKES ME THINK YOU HAD SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE DEFEAT OF SA'AR?

I'M NOT SURE, J'ONN. I THINK MAYBE I PULLED THE PLUG ON HIM.

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED. BUT THERE'S ANOTHER.

MAYBE YOU COULD TELL ME WHO...

...YOU ARE?

GYPSY DID WELL, HANNIBAL.

HER POWERS, WHILE NOT OVERT OR BASED ON PHYSICAL STRENGTH, WOULD CERTAINLY BE AN ASSET TO A GROUP WITH THE SORT OF CHARTER THE TASK FORCE HAS.

BEET BEET

HANNIBAL MARTIN.

UH HUH. OKAY.

HE SAYS YOU'LL KNOW HIS VOICE.

J'ONN, I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF AN INVESTIGATION AND I'M STALLED. I COULD USE THE RESOURCES OF YOUR OUTFIT.

WE'LL DO WHAT WE CAN, BATMAN.

I'M A BIT... ENCUMBERED AT THE MOMENT... THIS CASE HAS GOTTEN LARGER THAN I ANTICIPATED. THE TRAIL LEADS TO LONDON.

MORE THAN THAT I'M NOT FREE TO RELAY OVER AN OPEN PHONELINE.

I'LL UPDATE YOU SOON.

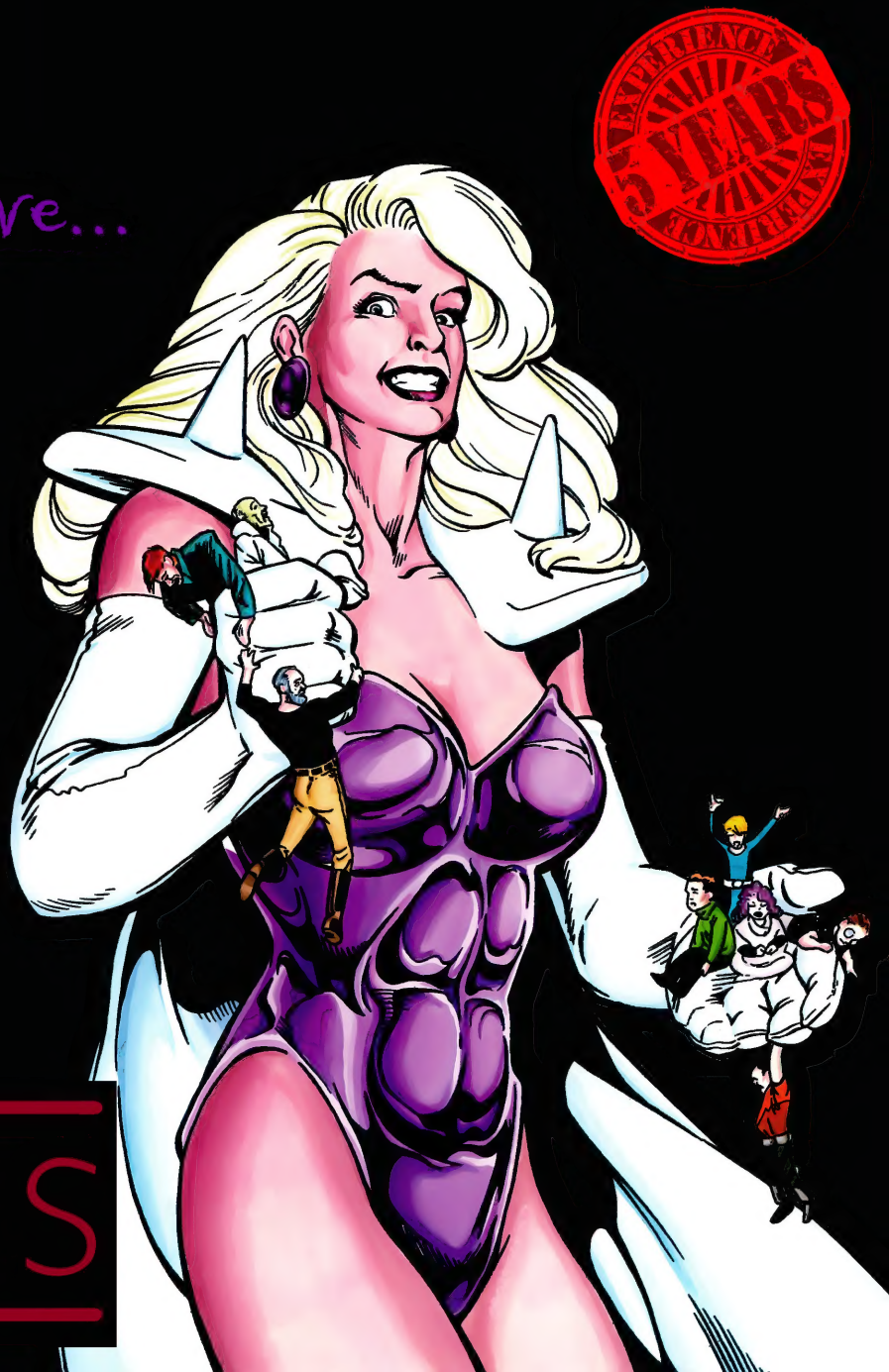
QUITE UNLIKE YOU TO SEEK HELP, MASTER BRUCE. A HEALTHY SIGN, I MUST SAY.

THIS IS TOO BIG FOR MY PRIDE TO STAND IN THE WAY, ALFRED. MILLIONS MIGHT DIE WITHOUT THE HELP OF THE TASK FORCE.

NEXT:

KNIGHTQUEST

From Baaldur, with love...



GLORITH

novus